

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 09126 280710Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 SP-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13
INSE-00 /049 W
-----009981 280716Z /17

R 280511Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
SECSTATE WASHDC 2267
AMCONSUL UDORN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 9126

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SREF TH LA
SUBJECT: THAI POLICY ON NEW REFUGEES

FOL MSG RECD ACTION BANGKOK DTD 270732Z MAR 78 AND BEING REPEATED
FOR YOUR ACTION:

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CHIANG MAI 115

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, TH, LA
SUBJECT: THAI POLICY ON NEW REFUGEES

REF: BANGKOK 8817

SUMMARY: IN A VISIT TO THE AREA AROUND THE CHIANG KHONG REFUGEE
CAMP WE WERE UNABLE TO CONFIRM REPORTS THAT TWELVE REFUGEES
HAD BEEN MURDERED BY LAO OFFICIALS AFTER BEING PUSHED BACK
INTO LAOS BY THAI AUTHORITIES. WHETHER THE STORY IS TRUE OR
NOT, ITS WIDESPREAD CIRCULATION APPEARS TO HAVE INSURED THAT
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 09126 280710Z

FOR THE TIME BEING THAI OFFICIALS IN THAT AREA WILL NOT HERD
NEW ARRIVALS BACK ACROSS THE BORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EMBASSY REFUGEE COORDINATOR AND THE CONSUL SPENT
MARCH 24 IN CHIANG KHONG DISTRICT AND IN CHIANG RAI CITY LOOK-
ING INTO REPORTS THAT TWELVE REFUGEES HAD RECENTLY BEEN
MURDERED FOLLOWING THEIR FORCED RETURN TO LAOS. THE SITUA-

TION WAS DISCUSSED WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS, REFUGEES IN THE CAMP AT CHIANG KHONG, SEVERAL THAI OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE PROVINCE VICE GOVERNOR, AND SOME NEWLY ARRIVED MEO REFUGEES.

2. WE CONFIRMED DEFINITELY THAT THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST TWO INSTANCES IN WHICH THAI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SENT REFUGEES BACK INTO LAOS. ONE OF THESE WAS A GROUP OF FORTY-FOUR MEO. AFTER RETURNING TO LAOS THEY AVOIDED CONTACT WITH LAO OFFICIALS, WANDERED AROUND INSIDE LAOS FOR A DAY OR TWO, AND THEN CROSSED BACK INTO THAILAND. THEY RETURNED TO THAILAND A COUPLE OF DAYS BEFORE WE ARRIVED AND WERE BEING DETAINED AT THE CHIANG KHONG DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS WHERE WE TALKED WITH SOME OF THEM. MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP WITH WHOM WE TALKED REPORTED THAT THEY HAD HEARD FIRING WHILE INSIDE LAOS AND CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD HEARD THERE WERE PEOPLE BEING KILLED. HOWEVER, WE DID NOT FIND ANY EYE WITNESSES AMONG THE PEOPLE WE TALKED TO DESPITE THAT FACT THAT ONE OF THE STORIES CIRCULATING IN THE CAMP CLAIMED THESE SAME REFUGEES WERE THE SOURCE OF THE STORY OF TWELVE REFUGEES BEING KILLED.

3. EVEN THOUGH WE WERE UNABLE TO FIND ANYONE WHO WOULD VERIFY THE STORY, THE STORY HAS BEEN WIDELY CIRCULATED THROUGH THE CAMP AND AMONG THE CHIANG RAI THAI OFFICIALS. THE VICE GOVERNOR CONFIRMED THE FACT THAT SUCH A STORY WAS CIRCULATING. HE CLAIMED THAT THE STORY HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 09126 280710Z

INVESTIGATED AND EXPRESSED HIS OWN PERSONAL OPINION THAT IT WASN'T BASED ON FACT.

4. STILL, WHETHER OR NOT THEY BELIEVE THE STORY THAT TWELVE REFUGEES WERE RECENTLY KILLED, IT APPEARS THAT NONE OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE ANXIOUS TO PUSH ANY MORE OF THE REFUGEES BACK INTO LAOS. THE FORTY-FOUR MEO LIVING IN THE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS ARE SETTLED INTO PLACE AND ARE WAITING SOME KIND OF DECISION ABOUT WHERE THEY WOULD BE SENT NEXT. THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT ANYONE WAS PLANNING ON PUSHING THEM BACK INTO LAOS ONE MORE TIME. WE ALSO HEARD THAT THERE ARE TWENTY-EIGHT YAO REFUGEES UNDER DETENTION AT A BORDER PATROL POLICE STATION BETWEEN CHIANG KHONG AND CHIANG SAEN. (ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT IN THE CAMP THE YAO WERE ALLOWED INTO THAILAND BECAUSE THEY HAD PAID OFF SOME THAI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.)

5. WHILE WE WERE UNABLE TO CONFIRM THAT THE KILLINGS ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE WE MUST ADMIT THE STORY MAY WELL BE TRUE. HOWEVER, WHETHER THE STORY IS TRUE OR NOT, THE ATTENTION IT HAS DRAWN, AS WELL AS THAT INTEREST DEMON-

STRATED BY UNHCR OFFICIALS AND BY MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY
AND CONSULATE STAFF, WILL PROBABLY INSURE THAT NO OFFI-
CIAL IN CHIANG RAI IS GOING TO ORDER ANY GROUPS BACK
INTO LAOS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. INSTEAD EVERYONE AP-
PEARS TO BE INCLINED TO FOLLOW A POLICY OF HOLDING SUCH
REFUGEES UNTIL SOME KIND OF DETERMINATION CAN BE MADE
ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL BE ALLOWED INTO THE UNHCR
SPONSORED CAMPS OR SENT TO THE RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED BUT
STILL EMPTY CAMP AT MAE CHAN.

TANNER UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO09126
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780134-0058
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780320/aaaaaqps.tel
Line Count: 126
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 275d81bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 8817
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3190767
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAI POLICY ON NEW REFUGEES FOL MSG RECD ACTION BANGKOK DTD 270732Z MAR 78 AND BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION
TAGS: SREF, TH, LA
To: CANBERRA GENEVA
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbcr//SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/275d81bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014